



# Complaints Policy and Procedure

Version	Changes	Date	Prepared/updated	Trustees Approval	Review
1	New document (adapted from the Baptist Union)	31-Mar-2025	Russell Lee	18-Apr-2025	Apr-2026
2	Reviewed and links checked (BU Policy unchanged)	1-Apr_2026	Carol Jagger	6-Jun-2026	Jun-2029

## 1. Introduction

The primary purpose of the Alnwick Baptist Church ('the Church') complaints procedure is to provide a process for dealing with complaints relating to the behaviour of, or activities and decisions taken by, Church staff, Charity Trustees, Church Members or Church volunteers.

Please note that there is a separate complaints procedure for complaints about a nationally accredited Baptist Minister, Baptist Minister in Training, Nationally Accredited Baptist Church Worker, or a Nationally Recognised Baptist Pastor. That procedure is available at:

[https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/520969/Complaint\\_against\\_Accredited.aspx](https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/520969/Complaint_against_Accredited.aspx)

You can find out if someone is a nationally accredited Baptist Minister by looking them up on the directory of nationally accredited Baptist Ministers at:

<https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/504943/Ministries.aspx>

## 2. General Principles

Wherever possible the Church would prefer to follow Scriptural principles of reconciling differences. However, on occasion attempts to resolve an issue informally may fail or may not be appropriate, and this formal complaints process is available for such cases.

## 3. Can I make a complaint?

Yes. You do not have to be a Church Member to make a complaint. If you believe you have reasonable grounds to make a complaint and you cannot resolve the issue informally or believe it would not be appropriate to do so, you can make a complaint.

## 4. What kind of complaint can I make using this procedure?

You can make a complaint about:

- a. The services that the Church provides –

For example, children or family activities, community benefit activities, baptisms, weddings and funerals. Poor service might include dirty facilities or the Charity Trustees failing to carry out fire extinguisher tests or other health & safety requirements.

- b. The behaviour of a Church employee, Charity Trustee, Church Member or Church volunteer that has affected you or someone for whom you are responsible –

For example, inappropriate language or behaviour; persistent late payment of bills; sexual harassment or unlawful discrimination.

- c. The application of Church policies and procedures, or decisions made by the Church, that affect you or someone for whom you are responsible –

For example, the Church withdrawing financial support for a community ministry.

## 5. What kind of complaints are not suitable for this procedure?

*You should NOT use this procedure to report safeguarding concerns relating to a child or adults at risk. Any safeguarding concern should be reported to the Designated Person or Safeguarding Trustee, following the [Church Safeguarding policy](#).*

*You should NOT use this procedure to make a complaint about the conduct or service of an accredited Baptist Minister, Baptist Minister in Training, Nationally Accredited Baptist Church Worker, or a Nationally Recognised Baptist Pastor. Instead, this should be made following the procedure for accredited Baptist church workers:*

[https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/520969/Complaint\\_against\\_Accredited.aspx](https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/520969/Complaint_against_Accredited.aspx)

*You should NOT use this procedure to raise an employment grievance. The Church has a staff grievance procedure which is set out in the employee's contract of employment. Employment-related grievances should be dealt with in accordance with that grievance procedure.*

## **6. How do I make a complaint and how will the Church deal with it?**

You should submit your complaint in writing to the Church Secretary (secretary@alnwickbaptist.org.uk) by using the Church Complaints form:

- [Appendix 1](#) is a version incorporating guidance on how to complete the form; and
- [Appendix 2](#) is a blank Church Complaints form. NB A copy of this is also available [here](#) for you to download.

On receipt of your complaint:

Within seven days –

The Church Secretary will acknowledge your complaint, informing you of which three Charity Trustees will be reviewing the complaint.

Within 14 days –

The three appointed Charity Trustees will begin their review of your complaint, including contacting you for further information if this is needed; finding out what happened, when it happened, and who was involved, and if necessary, interviewing people involved.

As part of their review, the appointed Charity Trustees will also:

- Inform the person who is the subject of the complaint about the nature of the complaint, unless this would seriously prejudice the review.
- Recommend what remedial action, if any, should be taken, and the reasons for this action.

When the appointed Charity Trustees have concluded their review, the Church Secretary will write to you on their behalf informing you of the outcome.

The Church may, on occasion, receive related complaints, or several people may make the same complaint. Depending upon the nature of the complaint and when each complaint is received, the Trustees may decide to consolidate the review or to deal with the earliest complaint first.

The more complex the complaint is, the longer it may take the Church to respond. This is especially likely if the complaint relates to historic matters or several people need to be interviewed. Please understand that if the police investigate the person who is the subject of the complaint in relation to the same or related matters, the Church may not be able to begin or complete the review until the police have completed their investigations.

Please be aware that the Church may decide that it is under a duty to report the matter to statutory authorities or the Charity Commission. If this is the case, the Church Secretary will write to you to tell you this.

The Church will treat the facts and content of your complaint carefully and in line with the [Church Data Protection policy](#). However, on occasion, the Church may need to make a public statement about the subject matter of the complaint, report it to statutory authorities or seek professional advice, and consequently the Church cannot guarantee to keep your complaint confidential.

You should maintain reasonable confidentiality as to the nature and content of your complaint, other than to seek professional advice if required. Once you have submitted your complaint and while the matter is being reviewed, you should avoid communicating with the person complained about.

## **7. What if I am not happy with how the Church deals with my complaint?**

If you are not satisfied with how the Church managed your complaint, you should write to the Church Secretary (secretary@alnwickbaptist.org.uk) within seven days of receiving the outcome stating that you wish to appeal and the grounds for your appeal.

The Church Secretary will assess if a second independent cohort consisting of one Charity Trustee<sup>1</sup> and a Northern Baptist Association Regional Minister<sup>2</sup> can be appointed to review the appeal, and if so, how long it will take and when the Church Secretary can notify you of the outcome.

If the Church cannot appoint a second independent cohort of Charity to review the appeal, the Church Secretary will notify you and advise you instead to consider contacting the Charity Commission.

An appeal will not include any new evidence, unless you could not with reasonable diligence have provided such evidence when you first complained.

If you remain unhappy with how the Church deals with your complaint, you may choose to contact the Charity Commission, the regulator of charities, using the following form:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

## **8. Vexatious Complaints**

If the Church concludes that your complaint is vexatious and you are a Church Member, then the Church may consider exercising church discipline. If you are not a Church Member, then the Church may not answer any further complaints you make.

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<sup>1</sup> This must be a different Charity Trustee to the three appointed Charity Trustees who originally reviewed the complaint.

<sup>2</sup> This must be a Northern Baptist Association Regional Minister who is independent of the Church. So, not a regular member of the Church congregation and not a formal member of the Church.

**APPENDIX 1: Complaints Form incorporating guidance for its completion**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**ALNWICK BAPTIST CHURCH COMPLAINTS FORM**

<b>Your details</b>	
Name:	
Address:	
Phone:	
Email:	
<b>Details of your complaint</b>	
Date(s):	
Person(s):	
Complaint about:	
<i>Briefly describe the nature of your complaint – for example, does it relate to a service, the behaviour of someone, the application of a policy or procedure, or a decision?</i>	
Supporting information:	
<i>State the matter or name of the person who is the subject of the complaint, what happened, when and where. Provide the contact details or statements of any witnesses. Include any additional information that you think would be helpful.</i>	
<i>If complaining about a decision, explain what the decision was about, when it was taken, and who made it. Explain what impact this decision has had, or you may fear will have, and upon whom. Provide any additional information that you believe would be helpful.</i>	
Have you tried to resolve this matter informally?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If not, please explain briefly why you decided not to try to resolve the matter informally –	
If you tried to resolve the matter informally, please explain what happened –	
<i>State who you dealt with, when and where, what information you provided to them, and what you felt was unsatisfactory about the outcome.</i>	
Action sought:	
<i>Describe what actions you want the Church to take. While the Charity Trustees cannot promise to do what you ask, it would be helpful to understand what outcome you are seeking.</i>	

Date you submitted your complaint to the Church:
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The church will treat your data carefully and in accordance with the [Church Data Protection policy](#); but please note the Church cannot guarantee to keep the fact and details of your complaint confidential if it is necessary and proportionate to share your data in order to review and resolve your complaint.

**When complete, please email or pass this form to the Church Secretary**

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**ALNWICK BAPTIST CHURCH COMPLAINTS FORM**

<b>Your details</b>	
Name:	
Address:	
Phone:	
Email:	
<b>Details of your complaint</b>	
Date(s):	
Person(s):	
Complaint about:	
Supporting information:	
Have you tried to resolve this matter informally?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If not, please explain briefly why you decided not to try to resolve the matter informally –	
If you tried to resolve the matter informally, please explain what happened –	
Action sought:	

Date you submitted your complaint to the Church:
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**When complete, please email or pass this form to the Church Secretary**